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When Scientists Finally Fall in Love with Philosophy

The need for metaphysics in science is making itself increasingly more obvious because our technological progress is bringing us closer to the existential and ethical questions humanity has been perplexed by for millennia. As a result, we have seen philosophers like David Chalmers bring consciousness to the table of discussion, because it is the axiomatic problem at the center of such questions. Therefore, scientists such as Donald Hoffman have responded to this by outlining the challenges we have ahead of us when it comes to understanding reality, and so the rift between science and philosophy is now starting to close.

When it is said that the scientific community is looking for “a unified theory of everything”, it is meant to say that they are looking for *one thing*— a single, fundamental building block which can help us explain existence itself. This is what we call in philosophy: “non-duality”, which is to say we strive for something which cannot be separated or divided. Many religions already describe reality as a non-dual entity, from which all things arise as separations of itself. The discrepancy I see in both science and religion however, is the failure to recognize the philosophical need to understand the root meaning of “something which cannot be divided”. When we say “thing”, we immediately think of an existential object such as *particles*, or we think of the spirit as a fundamental *thing* when we are religious, which is described as non-physical but still an existence nonetheless.

This means that science will at some point, not be able to go further with its method precisely because it is looking for a purely philosophical answer: *how did existence come to be?* Such a question necessarily invites the idea of *non-existence*, which cannot be measured or falsified by science, as that would be like a ruler trying to measure itself; we know that the only way to measure a ruler is by using a larger ruler- however in the pursuit of understanding existence, it makes no sense to create a measurement device in order to measure existence itself, because that measurement device would require existence to begin with, and therefore be incapable to measure it.

Why is this measurement relevant to science one might ask at this point. My answer is that if science is looking for a unified theory of physics, and it has also discovered that the base of reality is constituted of mere frequencies which create particles that pop in and out of existence, then it becomes necessary to understand what a “void”, really is. Now there might actually be more existential components to discover beyond the quantum level, but getting there it seems, requires a whole lot more philosophy.

Both science and religion do not deal with the question of non-existence however, in a manner which satisfies our needs here. Scientists default to an infinite regress of existence, meaning that there is no such thing as a void, and religion typically describes non-existence as what was *before* existence. These propositions are nonsensical when we realize that first, science has proven that our existential construct had a beginning, therefore space and time weren’t around before it, and that second, religion also contradicts itself by saying there was a God who existed in order to create existence to begin with. These are simply bad paradoxes.

My own proposition to remedy these is to suggest an even more absurd idea which is that existence *co-exists* with non-existence... Now as counter-intuitive as it may be, it is logically sound when we think about it a little more, or perhaps a lot more. My aim however, is not to present my own theory but to prompt the scientific community to reintegrate philosophy in its method, as it was in ancient Greek times, if it is to make any headway.

The background for why the importance of this became evident to me is due to a student of mine from Bavaria and a young Austrian student who contacted me after reading an article I wrote for this very magazine called “the singularity of the human hive mind”; In it I touch upon the idea of consciousness as a variable to focus on when thinking about technology. He told me he was studying physics and will also take philosophy after completing his degree. I found this strikingly interesting in comparison to my student Paula, who is still in high-school but is interested in going into the STEM fields, yet took particular interest in metaphysics and thereby became my student. I suddenly realized that both of them intuitively knew that there is a convergence of academic fields taking place, and so took an interest in what I was teaching.

Metaphysics, although very abstract, is also what has the most potential to offer the next generation of scientific minds when it comes to thinking about reality in a way that could perhaps reconcile quantum physics with the classical. It could also resolve some paradoxes and discover new and important paradoxes, which I believe will create a much-needed framework for humanity to live by. This is because meaning and morality usually follow after higher understanding. Resumed, metaphysics deals with paradoxes, and the mind’s perception of paradoxes is at the center where science and philosophy meet to explain reality in a meaningful way.

Most likely, it is the key to deriving a higher form of scalable ethics, a better understanding of purpose and the creation of meaning.

What I mean by “scalable ethics” is that we inevitably change our ethical systems over time, as a result of a better understanding of our world. The issue however, is that the main three ethical systems we employ (utilitarianism, deontology and consequentialism) do not really scale so much as they use relativism to remain in balance, but this will inevitably fail due to the global integration of disparate communities fueled by the exponential rate of technological change. How can we allow a relative morality to prevail when everyone’s actions impact everyone, everywhere? This means we are faced with a need for a different kind of flexible yet structured ethical system which can help us change our understanding of what is moral and immoral, as the future changes things for us ever faster. This being said, building an ethical structure which is closer to the paradoxical concepts of metaphysics provides such a flexibility, and the challenge is to find structure in it; as far as moral relativity goes, it offers no structure whatsoever.

As for the understanding of purpose and creation of meaning, metaphysics has always been on the forefront of establishing theories which serve as fundamental bases for answering such questions: “*ultimate purpose is only known to God*” or “*ultimate purpose is absurd*”. These answers are tantamount to meaninglessness if we are to be pragmatic, yet with the advent of a better understanding of reality itself, better answers remain possible to us. Just to demonstrate this quickly, I like to tell people that we can better understand *what something is*, if we determine its counterpart. Then I ask them what the opposite of purpose could possibly be, at which point I receive various answers such as “meaninglessness” or “absurdity”. After debunking these in the following: *the opposite of meaningless is “meaningful”, and*

for absurdity its opposite is “logical”, so that can’t be. That is when I tell them that whatever is placed at the opposite of purpose, immediately takes on purpose, which is to be the counterpart to purpose. Therefore, the conclusion must be that purpose *has no antithesis*. Mind you, this is only applicable to ultimate purpose, and it does not serve to say that reality has no grand purpose, but the thought experiment shows that philosophy has real applicable power in the pursuit of understanding what reality is and what it is not. This kind of practice in the minds of physicists, neuroscientists, A.I researchers and other fields yet to be could prove very valuable.

The obvious example here would be to point out how these fields strive to take consciousness into account, and that such things as “purpose” and “non-existence” are the direct contents of consciousness which mirror our efforts to understand reality- why then are we not focused on metaphysics?

I hope we begin to see how important it is, otherwise we will see science continue to spin its wheels with infinitely regressive theories such as simulation theory and multiverses, which are not in themselves bad, but they do nothing else than explain something *about* reality, not *what* it is.